

## **IV. ACHIEVING THE VISION**

### **CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES- A**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The quality of life in Newtown is influenced by the quality, quantity and distribution of its natural resources. The Plan of Conservation and Development is a municipal tool to preserve and protect those elements of Newtown's natural environment that contribute to the Town's character and quality of life. The POCD defines those elements through a natural resource inventory process and by establishing goals, strategies and implementation recommendations for protecting Newtown's natural environment. Plan Memorandum #3, Conservation and Natural Resources provides a full discussion of this topic.

#### **B. DEFINING NEWTOWN'S NATURAL RESOURCES**

**NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY:** The process of protecting Newtown's natural environment included a documentation of the town's natural resources, including the geologic (soils, bedrock & surficial geology), hydrologic (rivers, streams, lakes and ponds) and biologic (plant and animal habitat) characteristics of the natural landscape. This inventory also documented Newtown's existing open space resources.

This natural resource inventory used Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to map and analyze natural resource information to provide a foundation of information used in formulating policy recommendations that are designed to ensure proper protection of the Town's natural features identified. The mapping of these natural resources also provides an opportunity to observe, on a town-wide scale, the distribution of the elements that help define Newtown's natural landscape. The ability to visualize the distribution of the town's natural resources through maps ensures that the context in which policies affecting natural resources and open space is not lost.

#### **C. CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES: ISSUES, GOALS AND ACTION AGENDA**

The protection of Newtown's natural resources is a difficult task due to the many competing interests for the use of land. Proper allocation of Newtown's finite natural resources is a balancing act that involves consideration for private property rights, the economic development needs of the community and public health and safety requirements.

In recent years, an approach to natural resource protection and open space planning has gained a focus that involves the linkage or expansion of existing open space resources with other protected open space in the town and the surrounding region. This approach transcends town borders and looks more broadly at regional open space networks to find opportunities for linkage. Greenway planning, as it is often referred to, has been embraced by the State in the formation of the Connecticut Greenways Council, a part of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. This approach not only provides a regional open space network, but also improves the communities' natural infrastructure by providing close-to-home recreational opportunities.

Basic to the protection of Newtown natural resources are the following precepts:

- Growth will continue to take place;
- Land is a basic and finite resource and control of its use is essential to the public welfare;
- The town has the power and the responsibility to preserve critical natural resources through

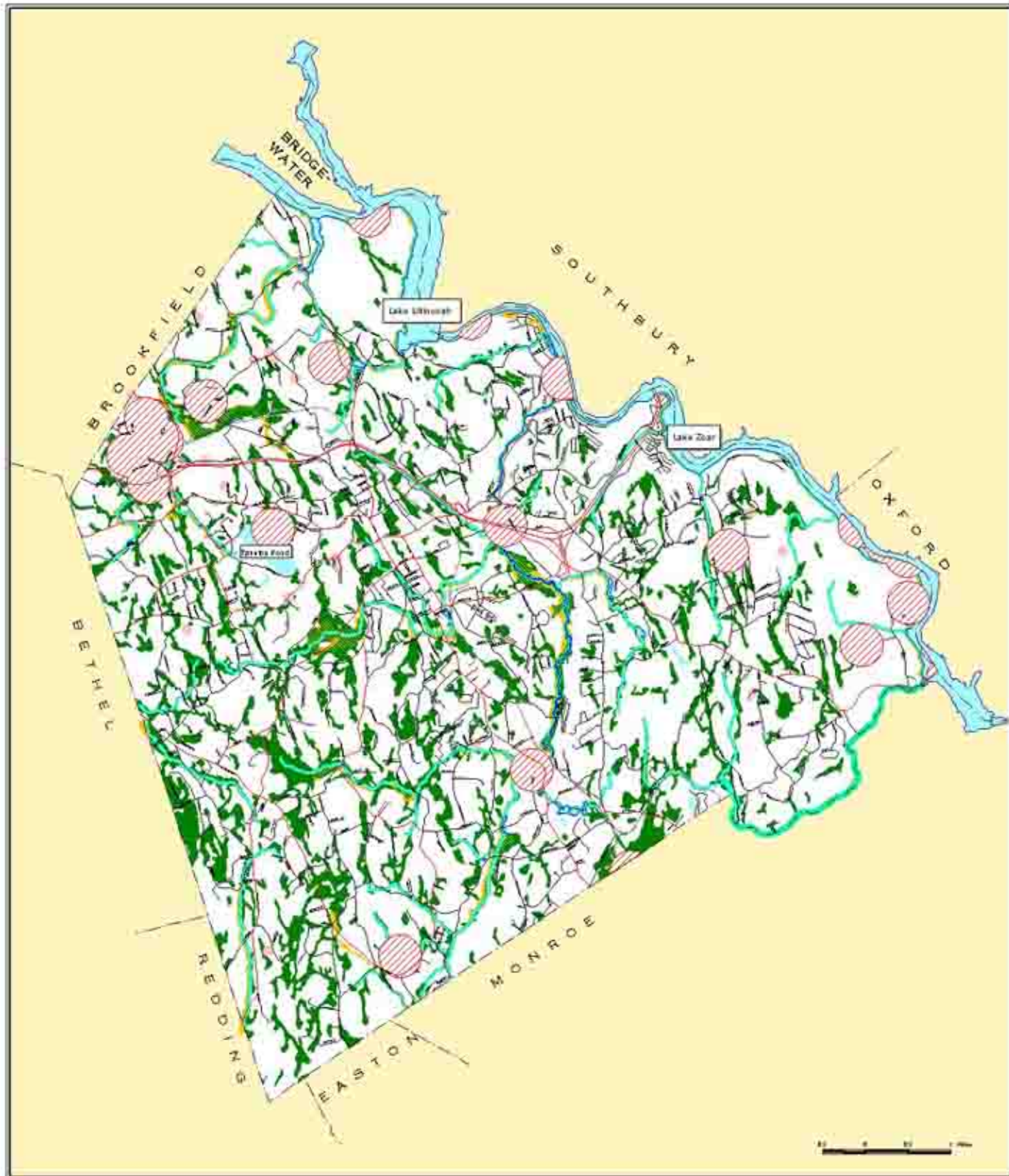


Figure 4



- planning and the regulation of land use;
- The Town has the legal authority to acquire open space and to administer and maintain acquired property in the public interest.

The process of updating Newtown's POCD, identified the key issues concerning the Town's important natural resources and the need for their protection. The following section describes those issues, establishes community planning goals to be used to guide future activities affecting those resources and recommends an action agenda for achieving those goals.

(See Conservation and Natural Resources- B)